

“THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR”

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal
CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
“HOUSEHOLD WORDS”

No. 258. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1873.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

AT HER MERCY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF “LOST SIR MASSINGBERD,” “A PERFECT TREASURE,” &c. &c.

CHAPTER VIII. IN WHICH MR. ANGELO HULET IS “UPSET.”

THE public dinner at Lucullus Mansion was a very different affair from English tables d'hôte in general, where folks converse in cliques, and glare at their vis-à-vis, or, silent as fishes, preserve a severe, but sad decorum, befitting a Cæsar when making his arrangements for perishing decently. After the company was seated, each person was here introduced to his or her neighbour, by either the master or the mistress of the ceremonies, and the character of an ordinary dinner-party was imparted to the affair as much as possible. Mr. Hodlin Barmby did the honours at the bottom of the table, and looked the genial host to perfection; he was not eloquent—unless you got him on a horse—but was always ready to come to the rescue of the conversation with the weather and the crops; and if it needed a dead lift, had only to look towards his better half for the required assistance. He had his orders to refer to “my father, Sir Hesketh,” when any new-comer was present, but in other respects was very wisely permitted to take his own line; if any exceptional people were present—whom a reference to the prospects for the next Derby was likely to shock—Mrs. Barmby took care to place them in her own neighbourhood. Under these circumstances the host had generally the pick of the company about him, while the hostess was surrounded with the feebler sort, who required colloquial manipulation.

On the present occasion, however, there

were none of what Mrs. Barmby was wont to term her “delicate cases” at table; and only one pair of “lay figures”—a banker from the City, said to be worth half a million, and his consort, who was said to have money of her own in the concern, and who maintained a financially phlegmatic air upon the strength of it. These sat on Mrs. Barmby’s right, and next to them Mr. Paragon, an Australian colonist, who had come to England to spend in horseflesh what he had amassed by sheep, and who would have given his horse-shoe scarf-pin to have been sitting beside Mr. Barmby, instead of between prim Mrs. Bullion and Mrs. General Storks, of the United States army, who made up for the silence of her other neighbour by a constant stream of inquiries concerning the progress of civilisation in the antipodes, to which he was very far from being in a position, either from personal experience or otherwise, to reply.

Mrs. General Storks was a rich widow, by no means without good looks, and though, as Mr. Barmby characteristically observed, “her voice was a little high up, and her dress a little low down, had her heart in the right place,” as, perhaps, we may have some opportunities of observing for ourselves. On Mrs. Barmby’s left was Mr. Hulet, who had himself placed his niece upon his other hand, in order, as he said, not to destroy the symmetry of the table by putting two ladies together; but also, as I shrewdly suspect, with a view to taking his dinner medicines with the greater secrecy; for Mrs. Barmby, he reasoned, would naturally endeavour to screen the peculiarities of a guest from observation, while a male stranger might sniff at the elixir, and ask what on earth it was. So, after all, Evy found herself next to Mr. De Coucy.

He was a man of at least three score, but still handsome and upright, and though dressed in sober black, like a clergyman, had an unmistakably soldier-like appearance; indeed, in his youth he had served, and not without distinction, in the Austrian army, which he had quitted upon the demise of a relative who had left him a considerable fortune; his manner and speech were courtly to excess, and on one thin white finger, which he had a habit of laying on his cheek, in order, perhaps, to attract public attention, glittered an emerald gem of about two thousand years old.

"You are looking at my ring," he would say, if his neighbour omitted to take any notice of it, "and, indeed, it is somewhat worthy of your attention." And then he would go on to state, at considerable length, how it had been engraved by Pyrgoteles for Alexander.

Beyond him sat Mrs. Sophia Mercer, a washed-out but lady-like looking personage, evidently come to Balcombe for the "aspects," and Miss Judith Mercer, a girl of eighteen. A petite gipsy of great beauty, and with no more resemblance to her aunt than a carnation has to a daffodil.

"What a very beautiful girl you have for your neighbour," whispered Evy, with reference to this young lady, after the ice had been broken between Mr. De Coucy and herself, by a little talk about Balcombe.

"It is certain you can afford to say so, Miss Carthew," returned the old gentleman, gallantly; "but do you really think her good-looking? I have got into quite a hornet's nest here for asserting as much."

The gay old Lothario forgot to add what was the fact (though, to do him justice, he bore her no malice on that account), that Miss Judith herself had stung him by a refusal of his hand and gem.

"I think her charming," said Evy, frankly; "is that her mam—"

Here Mrs. Sophia Mercer, who with her niece had been engaged in conversation with some folks on the other side of them, leaned forward and looked round towards Evy; doubtless somebody had passed a similar admiring observation respecting the latter to that which she herself had made upon Miss Judith, and the old lady was curious to behold the newly-arrived belle. She was very near-sighted, and had to adjust a pair of gold eye-glasses before making

the desired reconnaissance, which gave Evy, on the other hand, an opportunity of observing her. A pale-faced, and rather freckled female, with dollish blue eyes, was Mrs. Sophia, but she had a gentle and pleasant expression, too, which rayed out into downright admiration as she gazed on Eva's blush-tinged cheeks and down-drooped eyes.

"Heaven have mercy upon us!" gasped Mr. Hulet, softly.

"What is the matter, uncle?" inquired Evy, in alarm; for that gentleman had fallen back in his chair, with a scarlet countenance, and was pressing his hand to his heart.

"One of my spasms, dear, that's all; don't take any notice," replied Mr. Hulet, in a hurried whisper. "What a mercy it was that I brought my elixir." Then there was a faint pop of a cork under the table, and an odour, unhappily not so faint, began to pervade his neighbourhood, as though a chemist's shop had been suddenly opened.

"No, that is not Miss Judith's mamma," returned Mr. De Coucy, in answer to Evy's unfinished inquiry; "it's her aunt, and they are the very antipodes of one another. The one is, so to speak, faded and washed out, while the other is a very fast colour. How demure is the elder lady, how audacious the younger! A herald would call one a pelican in her piety and the other a peacock in his pride—affronté you know—but perhaps you have not studied heraldry."

"No, indeed," answered Evy, a little distracted with anxiety upon her uncle's account; "it always seems to me very foolish."

"Foolish! Heraldry foolish! My dear young lady!" And Mr. De Coucy held both his hands up (palms inwards, so as to keep the gem before the Public Eye), and threw his head back, as though somebody had clapped an ice-bag to his spine.

"My uncle always says there's nothing in it," explained Evy, apologetically; "he defines a crest to be 'a couple of jackasses fighting for a piece of gilt gingerbread,' and declares all the mottoes are made by the pastrycooks."

"My dear young lady," continued Mr. De Coucy, repeating that form of address with considerable unction, for it was his ingenious plan when bent on conquest, to use his years as a stalking-horse; the "young lady" was first made accustomed to his paternally affectionate manner, and then, on that agreeable foundation, he

made his approaches as a lover. "My dear young lady, your uncle deserves to be erased, as the king-at-arms would call it — cut off from society with a jagged edge; but it is terrible to think that an innocent"—he was going to say "angel," but he durst not—"young creature like yourself should grow up in such heresy. If you would do me the honour of being my pupil for half an hour per diem, for the next fortnight, I would answer for bringing you round to a very different opinion. As for heraldry being a useless science, nothing can be a greater mistake. Take up that spoon for instance, and tell me what you see in it? No, no, not in the bowl, for that would only show you a caricature of beauty, but in the handle."

"I see a stag walking," said Evy, quite unable to avoid a smile at the old gentleman's compliment, which was accompanied by a little bow in case it should have escaped her attention.

"Nay, pardon me, a stag is never walking in heraldry, but trippant. Moreover, it is not a stag but an antelope."

"But antelopes have not got double tails, and a tusk at the top of their nose?" said Evy, slyly.

"Yes, they have—in heraldry. Now, I should know that that was Barmby's spoon if I met with it in Otaheite. The cognizance has its origin in a circumstance that occurred in the family about 1480, and—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Evy, gently, "but I think the ladies are going." And, indeed, that stiffening of silk and rustling of muslin were very audible, which betoken the preening of the female wing for flight.

"You are coming to the ladies' drawing-room, I hope, Miss Carthew," said Mrs. Barmby, as she rose from her chair.

"Thank you," replied she, with a hesitating look towards her uncle, "I don't think I will to-day."

"Yes, yes, go by all means," said Mr. Hulet, hurriedly. "It is well you should begin to make acquaintances. I will join you when I have finished my—hem"—he tapped his little bottle of elixir—"my Madeira."

This was one of the most powerful restoratives in her uncle's medicine list, and she had never known him take more than a single dose of it before, save once, upon the occasion of Lord Dirleton's visit. What could have happened to have upset

him to such an extent that he was about to drink a bottle!

CHAPTER IX. IN THE LADIES' DRAWING-ROOM.

The ladies' drawing-room at Lucullus Mansion, though a large and handsome apartment, had not that stiff and formal air which belongs to its congener at a fashionable hotel. It was intended not only for show but for use, and thanks to Mrs. Hodlin Barmby's tact, even more than to the books and photographs, the besique boxes and chess-boards, the comfortable ottomans and sofas, with which she had provided it, it *was* used. A hostess may provide conversation-chairs, but cannot make her company talk—especially if it is a mixed one, and mostly strangers to one another—without some address; no, nor even sit in them, or else we should not find so many public drawing-rooms not only silent but empty.

At most hotels in England, those who have private sitting-rooms prefer to make use of them in place of joining the general company, and those who have not that expensive luxury, often endeavour, by their absence from the evening gathering, to persuade people that they have; but at Lucullus Mansion there were very few ladies who did not spend at least the period during which their lords were sipping their wine, in the drawing-room, and to none did Mrs. Hodlin Barmby omit to say "something civil." Those whom she saw evidently getting on well together, she wisely left to themselves after a passing word of courtesy, but where she saw "a hitch" she sat down, and smoothed the knot away, and set the skein going. More especially did she give her attention to the new-comers, whom it was her mission first to put at their ease, and then to introduce to such companions as she imagined would be to their taste. She brought her ducklings to the water, and set them swimming; and what mother duck could have done more?

On the present occasion, she naturally took Evy under her wing.

"Your uncle is somewhat of an invalid, I hear," said she, as they crossed the hall together in the rear of the cloud of muslin. "I noticed that he took Vichy water."

She must have also noticed that he had taken something very much worse; but to look at her, when she spoke those words of sympathy, you would have thought that she had had no nose.

"Yes, indeed, he is never very strong," said Evy, "but to-day he is unusually un-

well, I think. I dare say the fatigues of our journey have been a little too much for him."

"Very likely, my dear. Else, being unaccustomed to him, I was rather frightened, do you know, to see him change colour so at dinner."

"Did you see that? I was in hopes nobody had observed him but myself."

"Well, nobody else did, dear, except you and me, I have no doubt," returned Mrs. Barmby, smiling; "but it is my duty, you know, to see everything—and to hold my tongue in most cases. I should have been careful of speaking of such a thing as this, for instance, to most young ladies in your position, but I did you the compliment of supposing you had common sense. It could not make your uncle any worse to mention the fact; while in case it had escaped your observation, it was only right to call your attention to it."

There was a certain seriousness in Mrs. Barmby's air that belied her careless words, and did not escape her companion's observation.

"You did quite right, I'm sure, and I am much obliged to you," replied Evy, gratefully. "To say the truth, I wanted my uncle to go up-stairs at once, but he seemed to wish me to come into the drawing-room. It was not like one of his usual attacks at all. It seemed to me to be a sort of spasm."

"I think it was," said Mrs. Barmby; "but there is nothing to be alarmed at in that. They are common enough with all of us—I have them myself when anything puts me out—and especially with nervous subjects, such as I judge your uncle to be. You must tell me what is good for him, and he shall never be without a wholesome dish at table, I promise you."

"Oh, thank you. I have no doubt he will do very well. He told me that the Bacombe air seemed to have done him good already."

"Indeed! Well that is very strange, for I understood him to say, not five minutes ago, that he was very doubtful whether it would suit him, and that I must not be surprised if he started off all in a hurry."

"Oh, you don't know my uncle," laughed Evy. "He threatened to leave Dunwich at least once a week, and yet we lived on there for three years."

Mrs. Barmby laughed with her young friend; but she did not share her apparently careless view of the matter.

"Mr. Hulet has got heart disease," was

her private reflection, "and for half a minute at dinner to-day was, I am certain, in agony. It is just as well, however, that this poor girl should not be made aware of it—Mrs. Storks, let me introduce my young friend, Miss Carthew."

"I am very pleased to make her acquaintance," said that lady, frankly, "and I wish, for both our sakes, it had been made earlier; I mean before dinner. I would then have talked to my vis-à-vis instead of my neighbour—oh dear, what a dreadful man that Mr. Paragon is, Mrs. Barmby—I flatter myself also that Miss Carthew would have got on with me better than with that heraldic old griffin, Mr. De Coucy."

"It is very ungrateful of you to say so, considering the terms in which Mr. De Coucy used to speak of you, Mrs. Storks," returned the hostess, smiling.

"Yes, used to," returned the widow, laughing heartily; "but now, I fear, I am no more in favour with him than is our fair friend yonder." She motioned with her hand to where Judith Mercer was sitting by her aunt's elbow with a huge photograph book between them; then added, as her hostess slipped away to make herself pleasant elsewhere, "Are you good at character-guessing, Miss Carthew? If so, do tell me what you think of that young lady."

"Well, I never saw a more beautiful face," began Evy.

"Or a better figure," put in Mrs. Storks. "There can be no two opinions about her good looks. But are there not 'slumbering fires,' as the novelists say—'temper.' I call it—in those down-drooped eyes?—she knows we are talking of her at this instant, and therefore seems as meek as a dove—is there not impatience, too, in those taper fingers with which she is pointing out 'objects of interest' to that exacting old lady?"

"I did not know fingers were so significant," said Evy, smiling.

"What, don't you believe in chiromancy? Of course I don't mean the divination part of it, but in the indications that the hand affords. Well, at all events, you know what sort of tempers people have who bite their nails. That girl would bite her nails to the quick if it wasn't for spoiling the look of them. She is obliged to be all dutiful submission to her relative, who snubs her dreadfully; but she little knows she is sitting upon a volcano. Miss Judith will strangle that old lady some day, mark my words."

"Let us hope not," said Evy, a little shocked at the other's vigorous language, accompanied though it was with a smiling air.

"Well, I don't know about 'hoping not.' You have no idea how trying Mrs. Mercer is with her fainting fits (she has one a day) and her footstool, which is indispensable to her wherever she moves; it must be a dreadful thing to live with a hypochondriac. By-the-bye, why does your uncle always take paregoric with his meals?"

"I did not know he did," said Evy, attempting a stiff manner, though very much inclined to laugh.

"But it was paregoric, wasn't it?" returned her unabashed companion. "Well, at all events it smelt very like it. I hope he doesn't worry you, as Mrs. Mercer worries her niece."

"Indeed he doesn't, Mrs. Storks; my uncle is the kindest of men."

"Ah, that's very nice, and particularly as I see you mean it. Not like that girl yonder who will come up and thank you 'for your kind attention to her dear aunt' if you happen to thread her needle for her, and at the same time will wish you dead. He's very susceptible though, isn't he? Kind old gentlemen generally are."

"Susceptible? How do you mean?"

"Falls in love, like Mr. De Coucy, with every young woman he meets, does he not?"

"Oh dear no," said Evy, laughing, this time outright. "I never knew him do anything of the sort."

"Did you not? Well, I may be wrong, but it struck me more than once at dinner that he gave a very peculiar glance towards Miss Judith Mercer. Tried to look at her unobserved (which he didn't I'll answer for it); you know what I mean?"

"I can't say I do," returned Evy, frankly. "And I am quite sure that Uncle Angelo never——"

"Hush!" interrupted Mrs. Storks. "Here is Mrs. Barmby coming on an embassage from the malade imaginaire. If I am not mistaken, you are going to be introduced to her Transparency."

And, indeed, the mistress of the house here came over from Mrs. Mercer, with a polite request from that lady, that Evy would be so good as to grant her the great pleasure of an introduction.

"A very well meaning person indeed, my dear," whispered Mrs. Barmby, as she escorted her young friend across the room, "but a little peculiar."

"How good of you, I'm sure," lisped Mrs. Mercer, "I would have come over to you, Miss Hartopp, if it were not for my legs, which Doctor Carambole says I am not to venture upon for at least an hour after dinner. Judith—this is my niece Judith; you are just about of an age, and must, I insist upon it, be great friends—go and take Miss Hartopp's place on yonder sofa, and let her sit by me awhile."

Judith, who had risen at Evy's approach, and saluted her with a curtsey so low that it almost suggested a mock humility, bowed her head, and obeyed her aunt's behest, not, however, without shooting one lightning glance of jealous disfavour at the new-comer.

"I hope you don't think it a liberty," commenced Mrs. Mercer, "that I should have asked Mrs. Barmby to play the ambassador for me; but the fact is, I was so struck by a resemblance in your face—only you are prettier than ever *she* was—to a connexion of my own, that I felt irresistibly drawn towards you. Would you mind just pushing my footstool about two inches, or say an inch and a half. Thank you—that's just right. Judith herself couldn't have done it better. What a contrast, by-the-bye, you and my niece afford. The Rose of Sharon and the Lily of—what's the name of the place? My memory is utterly useless; as for names, my dear Miss Hartopp, they go in at one ear and out of the other, though after all that is of no great consequence, for Somebody very rightly observes, 'What is in a name?'"

Evy bowed adhesion; if Mrs. Mercer did not care about accuracy in names, why should she trouble her with the fact that her own name was not Hartopp?

"One often forgets names and dates," remarked she, wishing to say something comforting, "though one remembers other things well enough."

"Yes, but I don't remember other things, child," answered Mrs. Mercer, peevishly; "and when you get to my age, especially if you have had bad health—there, I've lost my knitting-needle. You don't happen to be sitting upon it do you? Doctor Carambole knew a poor girl who did that once—no, by-the-bye, she swallowed a packet of them, or perhaps it was only two of them, but at all events they increased and multiplied in quite a remarkable manner, and shot about all over her, and came out at her joints, her elbow joints particularly. You've found it on the floor? How good of you. Where was I?"

"You were speaking of the poor young lady who swallowed the needles."

"Just so; she wasn't a young lady, by-the-bye, being only a milliner, but of course the principle is the same. Persons in her own rank who chanced to shake hands with her, used to have their fingers pricked most dreadfully. However, they cured her at last by mesmerism. They got a mesmer—no, I'm wrong, it was magnetism—they got a magnet, one of the things you buy at the toy-shops with metal fishes, you know, only larger, and all the needles leapt out at once, like a shower of rain. Talking of showers, are you going to stay at Balcombe long? You'll find it dreadfully wet."

"I cannot say; that will depend upon how it agrees with my uncle, who is an invalid."

"Dear me. Well, now, that's very nice—very interesting, I mean, of course. I wonder whether his symptoms are like mine. Would you mind describing them?"

"I believe my uncle's ailment is chiefly connected with the nerves," remarked Evy, evasively.

"Ah, then he will derive no benefit from being here, nor anywhere else. My dear Miss Hartopp, I've been everywhere for nerves, and never lost them, though I have acquired several new diseases. Balcombe is neither better nor worse for me than other places."

"You find it pleasant, however, do you not? The scenery seems exceedingly picturesque."

"I believe it is; but I am too near-sighted to see scenery. I am obliged to look at everything through these double glasses, which is very fatiguing to a person in my delicate state of health. I can't hold them up for more than half a minute at a time. Doctor Carambole says, 'Let your niece hold them up for you, then,' but that looks so ridiculous, you know. Most near-sighted persons have some natural advantage in this respect. People who wear these double things have often a little knob on the bridge of their nose; but my knob"—and here Mrs. Sophia Mercer ran her finger along her own nose, which was retroussé—"is at the very end of it, you see, and quite useless. How old are you?"

The abruptness of this inquiry was accompanied by no change of tone; gentle regret at the shape of her most prominent feature gave place to tepid interest in her companion's age, and that was all.

"I am eighteen," said Evy.

"I should have thought you younger. Now Judith, who is one-and-twenty, looks fully her years. Blondes and brunettes are so different in that respect. You will keep your youth for a certain time, my dear miss Hartopp, and then fall suddenly—just as I did—all to pieces."

"I hope not," said Evy, laughing; "and, indeed, Mrs. Mercer, I don't see that you have done so."

"It is very good of you to say so, I'm sure, my dear; but I'm a wreck. Sitting as I am now, with a footstool nicely adjusted—by-the-bye, could you push it just half an inch nearer, thanks—and with a hard cushion—soft ones are worse than nothing—to support the small of my back, I present a tolerable appearance. But you should see me, when I am getting up in the morning—I wish you would some day, for it's a long business, and I should like to have somebody to talk to besides Judith. That's what I admire so much in reading of the French kings. They received society in their bedrooms. I dare say you have read all about their great levées and their little leveés, and so on, while their wigs were being curled, though there is nothing of that kind, thank goodness, about me. It's all my own hair, such as it is. You would never guess it to have been once a beautiful brown, just like your own, and so long that I could sit upon it. Can you sit upon yours?"

"Well, really," laughed Evy, "I never tried."

"Did you not? I could just do it by throwing my head back as though I were taking a pill. By-the-bye, it must be nearly time for me to take one now; but there, Judith never forgets to remind me to the moment. She has such a good head. I dare say you look after your uncle in the same way. You must introduce me to him presently, for I am sure we shall have many topics in common. Who is that gentleman coming into the room? I can't find my glasses. Doctor Carambole says—God bless my soul and body!"

"Miss Mercer, your aunt is ill," cried Evy, terrified by the sudden change in her companion's appearance, even more than by her ejaculation. To sink back in her chair was an impossibility for Mrs. Mercer, because of the supplemental cushion, but her colourless face had turned to a livid white, and was drooping, with shut eyes, upon one side, in a very alarming manner. Before Evy had finished her sentence Judith had crossed the room,

and snatching up a bottle of smelling-salts that lay on the table, applied it to her relative's nostrils.

"Good Heavens, what is the matter?" shrieked a chorus of female voices.

"It is a fainting fit," observed Mrs. Storks, quietly, more with the object of reassuring the trembling Evy, than of allaying the general anxiety.

"It is not," answered Judith, decisively, "or at least it is not one of those to which my aunt is subject."

One good soul ran for water, another kindled a wax light, and seized a quill feather, and Mrs. Hodlin Barmby threw wide the glass door, that opened on the garden terrace, to give the patient air.

Even these sovereign remedies failed of their effect for several minutes, at the expiration of which Mrs. Sophia Mercer opened her eyes, and glanced around her in an apprehensive manner, while at the same time the colour rushed to her cheeks.

"The gentlemen are all gone, my dear," observed Mrs. Barmby, rightly translating the poor lady's look of distress. "You feel better now, don't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Barmby, thank you; there's nothing, as Doctor Carambole says, like salts"—here the patient sniffed at it vigorously—"except senna. Who is that holding my head?"

"It is Miss Carthew," said Mrs. Barmby.

"Ah," sighed Mrs. Mercer. "Why did you tell me her name was Hartopp? Now I understand it all."

A remark containing an enigma so pregnant and profound that its solution must not be disclosed until our next chapter, and perhaps not even then.

OUR FORMER WARS WITH THE ASHANTEES.

THE LAST WAR.

OUR last war with these bloodthirsty savages took place in 1864, and was attended with great loss of life. Almost the moment the news reached England, that the Governor of Cape Coast Castle was intending to exact retribution from the King of Ashantee, for an outrage committed by him upon British territory, the prophets raised their voices and warned our ministers that the pestilential climate would too surely fight for the enemy. Insufficient precautions, they said, had been taken to protect our forces, and the inevitable result would be serious loss and suffering. The cost of the petty war both

in men and money, they also proclaimed, would greatly exceed any advantage to be gained from it. And the forebodings of the political prophets in this case turned out only too true.

The news of these unfortunate hostilities had scarcely reached England, when questions were addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, by Sir John Pakington, as to the causes which had led to the war with the King of Ashantee, and what prospect there was of our troops being relieved from the destructive effects of that climate. Statements had reached him that our governor at Cape Coast Castle intended to invade the Ashantee territory, and to take possession of the capital. If this were true, it would be a most visionary scheme, at once hopeless and impossible. He had heard that the King of Ashantee had at his disposal a considerable army; but whether he had or had not, his natural position would repel an attack, for no army could be so strong, no fortress so impregnable, as the dreadful climate and pernicious atmosphere which prevailed over the hundred and fifty miles which lay between the capital and the sea-coast. The effects of this on the European constitution rendered life not worth three weeks' purchase, and those Europeans who escaped death from the climate were in many cases afflicted with idiocy. Another peculiar fact was, that negroes appeared to suffer as much from the climate as Europeans; he had been lately informed that a wing of a West India regiment, brought over from the West Indies in order to aid in the prosecution of the war—numbering seven hundred negroes strong—was landed on the Gold Coast, and five days afterwards no fewer than a hundred and twenty of these seven hundred negroes were placed hors de combat. It had been stated that the military expense for this absurd enterprise reached a thousand pounds a day; but he found from more reliable information that it very far exceeded that. He earnestly hoped that this folly—he might say this worse than folly—would be put a stop to.

Mr. Cardwell stated that the origin of the war was the flight of two slaves, subjects of the King of Ashantee, into our settlement on the Gold Coast, and the refusal of the governor to deliver them up, on the ground that if he did so their death would be inevitable. The conduct of the governor in that case had received the approval of the Duke of Newcastle. In the spring of 1863, the Ashantee forces

made an incursion into the territory of neighbouring chiefs, and advanced within forty miles of the English possessions, destroying in their progress upwards of thirty towns and villages, sacrificing many lives, and carrying off much property. In the succeeding autumn, the governor, finding that the King of Ashantee intended a renewal of hostilities, and an attack upon our settlements, determined to anticipate him by sending a force into his territories. Having mentioned the further progress of events, the right honourable gentleman concluded by stating that Her Majesty's government had determined at once to send transports to remove our forces from the Gold Coast, so as to bring the troops within the number that could be accommodated there by the ordinary means, with due regard to their health and comfort; that the troops should be withdrawn altogether from the interior; that the stockades should be given over to the native chiefs who were friendly to the British, to protect their own territory; and that the stores should be removed so far as the circumstances of the case would render it practicable, while those which could not be removed would be made a present of to the friendly chiefs. With regard to the future, he could only say that he entirely sympathised in the feeling that it was not our duty to make expeditions at a distance from the sea-coast into the interior of Africa; and as there was no desire or intention to extend our territory, and the rains had put an end to all warlike operations, it was not intended to renew them.

The discussion was not, for the present, carried further; but those who had taken up the case, and felt strongly the impolicy of the steps taken by the colonial authorities, were not disposed to let the matter rest here. Accordingly, Sir John Hay, who had previously manifested much interest in the case, gave notice of a resolution expressing the regret of the House at the proceedings in Ashantee, and moving a censure upon the government upon that account. In introducing this motion Sir John Hay inculpated those who had authorised this unfortunate expedition, without, as he alleged, the requisite precautionary measures, in rather strong terms. He said that the climate of Cape Coast Castle was most deadly, and, except in the rainy season, there was an insufficient supply of water for the soldiers, and no cattle could exist. In such a state of things every necessary comfort should have been pro-

vided for the troops. Transports should have been moored off Cape Coast Castle as a base of operations, and to convey supplies from Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Hospital ships should also have been stationed there, and steamers provided to convey the sick to more healthy places. These precautionary measures had not been taken. In this war, carried on without the knowledge of the House, the arrangements for the comfort and subsistence of the troops were made in the most niggardly spirit, totally disregarding the health of the men; and frightful mortality ensued alike amongst officers and men. Who was to blame for this? He readily acquitted the Colonial Office, and as to Mr. Pine, Governor of Cape Coast Castle, he had only obeyed the instructions of his superiors. The War Office was no doubt to blame for ordering the additional troops to go there, and providing an insufficient commissariat; and the Admiralty was to blame for having delayed to send out transports to remove the rest of the force, and having at length sent them without proper orders. The actual responsibility lay, in fact, on the Cabinet. In conclusion, he moved, "That the government, in landing forces on the Gold Coast for the purpose of waging war against the King of Ashantee, without making sufficient provision for preserving the health of the troops to be employed there, had incurred a grave responsibility, and that the House lamented the want of foresight which had caused so large a loss of life."

The Marquis of Hartington opposed the motion, and defended the War Office from the charges made. The only troops sent by the order of the government to Cape Coast Castle were seven companies, and they landed there from the Tamar in April. They were despatched thither on the representations of Governor Pine; as to the accommodation provided for the troops, an officer was specially sent out to make the requisite arrangements. The noble marquis then entered into details at considerable length, describing the measures taken to provide the troops with provisions, including fresh meat, and also wholesome water, for which filters were sent out calculated to supply twelve hundred gallons of pure water per day. The number of surgeons at the station for the fourteen hundred men had never been less than six; it was generally eight, and for the last five months it was eleven and

twelve. As to medical stores and comforts there was an abundance, and with regard to the provision of hospitals, if anything whatever had been omitted, they must have heard of it through the communications received from the Gold Coast. But he had looked over all the despatches, and he could not find a single complaint of the officer in command of the troops, the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, the officer in charge of the commissariat, or the senior naval officer on the station, with regard to that or any other subject connected with the comfort and welfare of the troops. If there had been delay in sending out transports for the removal of the troops, at all events there had been none in despatching instructions for the withdrawal of the force from the interior. He also referred to the deaths which had been said to have been caused by this expedition, and he showed that they were in many cases wholly unconnected with that event. . . . The honourable gentleman had stated that the deaths of thirteen officers were all owing to the criminal incapacity of Her Majesty's government. He (Lord Hartington) had shown how many of those officers' deaths were not owing to the expedition, and how many officers annually died on the coast of Africa when not engaged in warlike operations at all. He had shown that the annual proportion of those who died or were invalided was almost fifty per cent, and he maintained that the facts which he had been enabled to state to the House had entirely disproved the assertions made. . . .

General Peel said his impression was that there had been the grossest neglect, and that the events of Cape Coast Castle were, on a minor scale, a repetition of all that had taken place in the Crimea. . . . Had he been Secretary for War, no Governor Pine or Secretary for the Colonies should have induced him to send troops to the Gold Coast in the rainy season.

After Lord Palmerston and Mr. Disraeli had made bitter party speeches, the House proceeded to a division, which proved to be a very close one. There voted for Sir J. Hay's resolution, two hundred and twenty-six, and against it, two hundred and thirty-three. The debate was marked by considerable excitement, and the demonstrations usually attending a keen party struggle.

The result of the war only too faithfully fulfilled the predictions of the political prophets. In vain our scanty forces struggled with the fatal climate, till at last,

worn out and hopeless, the war terminated with an inglorious treaty. The King of Ashantee gloried in an imaginary victory, and we were left on the extreme edge of the Gold Coast, shorn of prestige, and, in the opinion of our enemies, ripe for destruction whenever the fitting moment arrived.

Having now completed a brief summary of our former wars with the Ashantees, the savage customs of this strange people are the next subject for us to consider. It will quickly be seen that we have come into contact with a people wealthy and powerful as the ancient Mexicans, and equally bloodthirsty. The great annual festival of the Ashantees, called "the Yam Custom," is held in the early part of September, when the yams become ripe. The yam, the potato of the Africans of the Gold Coast, is planted in December, and dug up in the September following, but not eaten till the conclusion of the "custom." To this feast all the native caboceers, or petty governors, and the vassals of the king, are invited. The only exceptions, in Bowditch's time, were the Kings of Inka and Dagwumba (who sent deputations of their principal captains). The only officers of the king who are excused are those absent on government business, such as ambassadors, &c. This festival is an uncomfortable time for the cabinet ministers of Ashantee; for if the fidelity of a chief has been suspected, or he has committed any offence, he is generally punished at this time. The yam custom resembles the Roman saturnalia in its license, for neither theft, intrigue, or assault can then be punished, and every one abandons himself to vice without restraint.

On the 5th of September the paths leading to Coomassie, the capital of Ashantee, are crowded by nobles, who vie with each other in the splendour and variety of their retinues. It is the cruel custom of these caboceers or captains to increase the dignity of their entries by sacrificing a slave at each quarter of the town. On the afternoon of the next day, the king receives all the caboceers in the large area where, in Bowditch's time, the cannons captured at Dunkara used to be placed. The crush was tremendous, and the chief objects of attraction were the heads of kings and chiefs whom the kings of Ashantee had conquered from the reign of Sai Tootoo to that of the reigning sovereign. The dried heads of chiefs who had been punished for revolt were also displayed by

two parties of executioners. These wretches formed two bands of upwards of one hundred each, who defiled before the king in a wild dance. Some of these men made the most irresistible grimaces, others used the most frightful gestures, clashing their knives on the skulls, in which sprigs of thyme were inserted as charms to keep their spirits from troubling the king. Firing off guns and drinking palm wine were the only amusements of the people during these ceremonies, while the cabocceers and the executioners were defiling before the king. Each of the chiefs was announced with his full titles, like a guest at a London evening party, and passed round the royal circle, saluting every umbrella that canopied a grandee. In the evening, when the torches were lit, the effect of the incessant musketry and clamour, says the traveller whose account we abridge, was terrific and unearthly. The umbrellas of the chiefs could be seen crowding up all the by-streets. The scene resembled one vast fair, and, between every interval of the musket firing, there came the blare of distant horns and the beat of countless drums. This satanic carnival lasted till four in the morning, just before which hour the king retired.

An English artist, who sketched one of these Yam customs, has depicted one of the native chiefs of importance under his umbrella, borne on the shoulders of his chief slave. He is saluting friends as he goes along, and is preceded and surrounded by boys, who wave elephants' tails and feathers. His captains are lifting their swords in the air, and hallooing out the deeds of their chief's forefathers. His stool of honour, which is borne close to him, is ornamented with a large brass bell. Another chief is preceded by a standard-bearer, and followed by numerous attendants. He is supported round the waist by a confidential slave. One wrist of the chief is so heavily laden that the African dignitary is obliged to support it on the head of a small slave boy, who seems proud of the honour. As the chiefs are carried along they salute their fellow peers by a peculiar horizontal sawing motion of the hand. Their umbrellas are waved up and down to raise a breeze, and large grass fans are also kept playing round their august heads.

In another group the artist has drawn, the chief is followed by his handsomest slave girl, who bears on her head a small red leather trunk full of gold ornaments and rich cloths. Behind follow soldiers and

drummers, the latter grimacing as they throw their drums in the air and catch them with agility. The boys in front carry elephants' tails and fly-flappers, while the captains, with raised swords, are hastening forward the musicians and soldiers. Some of these attendants carry the chief's stool, or execution block, which is so soaked with blood, that it is always usual to cover it with red silk. One of the chiefs is represented as being carried in a state hammock bound with red taffeta. He is smoking calmly under his umbrella, the top of which is crowned by a stuffed leopard. On one side of the picture is a pinioned slave, one of the intended victims, who has knives thrust through his cheeks and mouth to prevent his uttering curses against the king and his subjects. He is carried as a show, preceded by two of the king's messengers, who clear a way for him. In another corner the artist has introduced the king's four linguists seated in conversation under an umbrella, while a chief is administering the sacred oath to a king's messenger who is to be sent to fetch an absent cabocceer, by placing a gold handled sword between his teeth.

At a Yam custom which Bowditch witnessed, the public criers were all deformed men, who wore caps of monkey skin. The king sat in a chair of ebony and gold, and held up his two fingers whenever a chief came to him to vow fealty, and pointing to a distant country with his sword, swore to conquer it. The throne and everything round it was glittering with gold. The royal stool was thickly cased with gold, and near it lay gold pipes and fans of ostrich-wing feathers, while from the captains' swords hung golden wolves' and snakes' heads as large as life. The attendant girls carried silver bowls for palm wine. The executioners, whose bodies were grotesquely painted, kept dancing up to him, beating on human skulls with the knives they carried. The children of the nobility who attended the king carried elephants' tails spangled with gold, and fly-flaps. The musicians sat or stood near the king, playing on instruments plated with gold. On the right and left of the king's umbrella were placed the flags of Great Britain, Holland, and Denmark, countries which the Ashantees, no doubt, considered as mere petty dependencies of their own.

At the top of the umbrella of old Quatchie Quofie, one of the chiefs, was a small black wooden doll, with a bunch of rusty hair on its head, intended to represent the famous cabocceer of Akim, whom Quat-

chie had killed in battle. He kept dancing before this figure, deriding his dead enemy, while his captains bawled out his glorious deeds. In one group the artist has sketched some Ashantees drinking palm wine; a boy kneels beneath those who drink, holding a second bowl to catch the liquor which the luxurious purposely, as a great luxury, allow to flow over their beards, the attendants all the while blowing on horns, and shouting the deeds of the revellers. Many Moors were present at these rejoicings that Bowditch witnessed, and were distinguishable by the huge size of their turbans. One of them pronounced blessings on the passing horsemen, who rode by on steeds which were covered with fetishes and bells, flourishing their lances, and followed by musicians who played on rude violins. The whole assembly round the king was surrounded by lines of soldiers, with here and there a group of musicians, some of whom wore old cocked-hats and soldiers' jackets, and presented a grotesque appearance.

The next morning, the king, with royal generosity, ordered large brass pans full of rum to be placed in various parts of the town for the refreshment of the populace. Vast crowds of slaves, freemen, women, and children, instantly collected round the pans, and fought and trampled each other under foot in their eagerness to drink. In less than an hour, excepting a few chiefs, there was not a sober person left in Coomassie. Parties of four Ashantees would be seen staggering under the weight of a friend whom they affected to be carrying home. Strings of women, who were covered with red paint, and walked hand in hand, fell down like rows of cards. Slaves and mechanics passed furiously declaiming on state policy. The drunken musicians clashed out tipsy music, and even the children of both sexes were lying drunk in the streets. The men and women, who at this annual feast usually wear their best clothes, trailed their robes through the mud in drunken emulation.

Towards evening the mob grows partially sober again, and the cabocceers again display their retinues in a great procession from the palace to the south part of the town, the king and his dignitaries being carried on rude palanquins amid a continuous blaze of musketry. The next day is occupied in state palavers; the day after the diet breaks up, and the cabocceers formally take leave.

At the Yam customs about one hundred persons, chiefly slaves or culprits, are sacri-

ficed in different parts of the town. Several victims are also sacrificed at Banhama over a large brass pan full of fresh and decayed vegetable matter. This is done to avert evil and to produce invincible fetish. Every chief also puts some slaves to death, and pours their blood into the holes from whence the ripe yams have just been dug. Those who cannot afford to kill slaves take the heads of those already sacrificed and place them in the Yam ground. It is customary also at the Yam feast to melt all the king's ornaments into new forms—a sight which is very attractive to the populace and the chiefs from a distance, and spreads the fame of the King of Ashantees' wealth and power.

"About ten days after the custom," says an African traveller, "the whole of the royal household eat new Yam for the first time, in the market-place, the king standing by. The next day he and the captains set off for Sarrasoo before sunrise, to perform their annual ablutions in the river Prah. Almost all the inhabitants follow him, and the capital appears deserted; the following day the king washes in the marsh at the south-east end of the town, the captains lining the streets leading to it on each side. He is attended by his suite, but he laves the water with his own hands over himself, his chairs, stools, gold and silver plate, and the various articles of furniture used especially by him. Several brass pans are covered with white cloth, with various fetish under them. About twenty sheep are dipped (one sheep and one goat only are sacrificed at the time), to be killed in the palace in the afternoon, that their blood may be poured on the stools and door-posts. All the doors, windows, and arcades of the palace are plentifully besmeared with a mixture of eggs and palm-oil; as also the stools of the different tribes and families. After the ceremony of washing is over, the principal captains precede the king to the palace, where, contrary to usual custom, none but those of the first rank are allowed to enter to see the procession pass. The king's fetish men walk first, with attendants holding basins of sacred water, which they sprinkle plentifully over the chiefs with branches, the more superstitious running to have a little poured on their heads, and even on their tongues. The king and his attendants all wear white cloths on this occasion. Three white lambs are led before him, intended for sacrifice at his bed-chamber. All his wives follow, with a guard of archers."

A former traveller in Ashantee describes the native captains as wearing robes of great value, woven from costly foreign silks, which had been unravelled by native workmen. They were of all sizes and patterns, of incredible size and weight, and were thrown over the shoulder in the manner of the Roman toga. The men wear small silk fillets round their foreheads, and many gold necklaces intricately wrought. They are fond of Moorish charms, which they enclose in small square cases of gold and silver or curious embroidery. They wear long necklaces of aggy beads, and strings of the same round the knee, while round their ankles they wear small gold coins, rings, and figures of animals in gold. Their sandals are of green, white, and red leather. Rude lumps of rock gold hang from their left wrists. At their great festivals they carry gold and silver pipes and canes, while they hang from their gold-handed swords, wolves' and rams' heads of gold. The curious-shaped blades of these state swords are kept encrusted with enemies' blood; the sword sheaths are made of leopard or fish skins. Their large war drums are supported on the head of one man and beaten by two others. They brace them with the thigh bones of their enemies, and ornament them with circles of enemies' skulls. Their kettle-drums are covered with leopard skin, the wrists of the drummers being hung with bells and iron ornaments, which jingle loudly when they are playing. The smaller drums are suspended from the neck by scarves of red cloth. The war horns, made of the teeth of young elephants, have gold mouthpieces, and are ornamented with the jaw-bones of enemies slain in battle. The Ashantee war-caps are adorned with eagles' feathers. The king's body-guard, in Bowditch's time, wore corselets of leopard's skin covered with shell ornaments of gold.

These corselets they stick full of small knives, which have sheaths of gold and silver, and handles of blue agate. Their bullet-boxes are of elephant's hide, also studded with gold, while the warriors hang from their arms and waist-cloths white horse-tails and silk scarves. Their long muskets are banded with gold, and the stocks are ornamented with shells. The soldiers wear caps of pangolin and leopard skin, with the tails left to hang down behind. Their cartouch-boxes are small gourds, covered with leopard or pig skin, embossed with red shells and small brass bells. Many of the soldiers wear

strings of knives on their hips and shoulders. Iron chains and collars are given to the most daring champions, who prize them, it is said, far above those of gold.

THE DYING YEAR.

RIPPLES the sun-gold o'er the western sky,
And island cloudlets, rose and amethyst,
Gleam in the amber light: the robin pours,
From the red-berried ash-bough, his full notes,
Sweet, plaintive cadences, whose clear sad hymn
Tells of the waning year; the silver rime
Of the first frosty evens, clusters white
Upon the crisp'd grass-blades, and the drops
Of diamond-dew congeal amid the bells
Of the last lingering flowers. The Autumn-Queen
Flashes with hectic crimson, for anon
Shall sound the knell that bids her glories cease.

A last faint perfume of the blossom-time
Hangs round the garden lawns, where glimmer still
A few bright scarlet clusters, yet untouched
By scathing kiss of frost; as one may see
Oft 'mid the desolation of a home,
Some genial spirit strive the rest to cheer,
Shining the brighter for surrounding gloom.
Death and decay! Ay, but the amaranth
Is fostered by Death's shadow; and frail man
From out the chill corruption of the tomb
Uprises glorified—the grave the key
That open throws the golden gates of Life!

SIDEBOARD-SQUARE.

UNDER the shadow of St. Paul's cathedral at sunset, not far beyond the jurisdiction of the Dean and Chapter, within earshot of the clank and clamour of the printing machines of the Times newspaper, at no great distance from Stationers' Hall, not above a hundred miles northward of Ludgate-hill, and near enough to Doctors' Commons for people who want a marriage license in a hurry, or require to look at a last will and testament on the spur of the moment, may be discovered Sideboard-square. I say may be discovered advisedly, for Sideboard-square is, and always was, a matter of discovery. Ordinary people—people who know London well—are unaware of its existence. Nobody has any friends there as they have in the old-fashioned squares of Russell, Bedford, Brunswick, Mecklenburgh, or Fitzroy. Nobody has any business there as they might have in the squares of Billiter, Crosby, Jeffery, Devonshire, and Great St. Helen's. Nobody has any political argument, with the chance of a free fight there, as they might have in Trafalgar-square, nor pleasure as they might have in that of Leicester. It is a square that nobody has any occasion to go to unless particular business takes him there, and a square that nobody visits unless he drifts in there by accident. Instances have been known of a wild young gentleman from the country

losing himself in this quiet haven, and knocking at every door in succession, and inquiring where he could get a marriage license. Flushed young fathers, with the glory of their first baby, have insisted upon leaving the announcement of the fact, together with six-and-sixpence in money, at Number One, under the impression that they had discovered Printing House-square, and would see the important announcement of their son's birth in the *Times* the following morning. Unfledged authorlings have rapped boldly at Number Five, and have been very indignant because they were not allowed to register the title of a work that nobody would ever think of publishing, and made uncalled for remarks relative to the law of copyright in England, because a respectable citizen refused to receive their five shillings, and requested them to apply to Stationers' Hall. People who are great in making short cuts have occasionally drifted in here, and generally made it a personal grievance that there was no outlet at the end of the square. A lost child has been known to stray into it for a sanctuary; a postman new to the neighbourhood has delivered letters intended for some other square there by mistake; two or three people have strayed into it during a dense fog, and have wandered round and round without finding any outlet, and have never expected to reach the realms of civilisation again. It is not a square much affected as a playground for children. Occasionally a ball or a tip-cat will fly in from the lane outside, and then the ragged boys will parley with one another for a time, and the most courageous of the band will rush in, secure the toy as quickly as possible, and bolt out again as if he had a policeman after him.

The entrance to the square is under a low broad archway. It is broad enough, but there is no thoroughfare for carriages, though the dwellers in the square all have the aspect of the people who, if it had not been for so-and-so, or such a thing, would have been riding in their carriages by this time. The inhabitants are by no means proud, though they are severely respectable. I am inclined to think that the word "genteel" would precisely describe their status in society. There is the entrance to an office under the archway, and this office is very grand in the matter of subdued brass plates, dim knockers, and captions looking bell-pulls. You cannot help wondering what business is carried on at this office. There is a legal aspect about the place, chastened with an ecclesiastical

flavour; there is a suspicion that it may be the haven of a litigious parish official in reduced circumstances, if one may judge from certain beadle-like insignia that may occasionally be found about the portal. On week days, about one o'clock, a pleasant odour of Irish stew pervades the neighbourhood, and on Sundays, at two, an appetising savour of roast goose and sage and onions has been wafted half-way round the square, and made the children at Number Ten turn up their noses at the excellent roast leg of mutton and Yorkshire pudding provided for their dinner. It may be argued from these circumstances that this parish official has in his old age fallen upon his feet, and that the wind of winter has been providentially tempered for the shorn beadle. This gentleman is not officially connected with the square: he does not perambulate its area in gold lace, and threaten small children with a large cane, or crack walnuts with the policeman at the corner. No, no. Nothing of the kind. But the very fact of his residing at the entrance to the square, and sallying forth in gorgeous gaberdine every Sunday, strikes terror into the hearts of the lazy 'prentices and dirty little boys of Limpin-lane, and prevents them from entering the sacred precincts. His magnificence awes them; they look upon him as the Bishop of London and the Chief Commissioner of Police rolled into one—the clearest idea of the church militant these young rascals possess.

Passing under the somewhat sombre archway the traveller emerges into Sideboard-square. You have left the narrow crowded thoroughfare of Limpin-lane but a few yards, but you seem to have entered a different world. You have escaped from the swift current, you have drifted out of the stream into a pleasant backwater; you can here move and paddle about to your heart's content, as long as you please, without any strain upon mind or muscle. You would think the great City had suddenly retired from business, and gone down into the country, were it not for the fact that the hum of the traffic and the buzz of multitudes is roaring like a weir in the distance. And ever and anon the clock-bell of St. Paul's comes booming over your head, as if the Dean and Chapter were firing a species of horological gun at distant steeples to remind them that they were somewhat behind the time. A delightful flavour of the City of the past, a delicious savour of behind the time lurks about the atmosphere of Side-

board-square. Progress seems to have turned aside from it, Enterprise has forgotten it, and ruthless Improvement has left it high and dry—a pleasant, ancient, mouldy island, amid a sea of modern stucco. It is paved all over with corn-punishing stones. There is not much traffic, either wheel or foot, over them, you can see by the long blades of bright green grass that are springing up here and there, and which are a source of infinite joy to the plump City sparrows. There is one lamp in the square, and one grand old plane-tree. This tree is looked upon with the utmost veneration. It is regarded as almost sacred. A dowager hamadryad, whose name is Gentility, lodges somewhere in its branches and watches o'er the welfare and shapes the destinies of her worshippers. It puts forth its leaves earlier than any other tree, and they remain upon its branches when the rest of the City trees are utterly bare; it is true the leaves become shrivelled and dusty and hard, but still they are leaves. It has been hinted that there is only one lamp in the square. This is true of the square as a public corporation, but private enterprise is not dead in this behind-the-age little cluster of dwellings. The doctor has a lamp projecting from his lintel of a very magnificent nature. It has a blood-red pane on one side of it, which at night glares like an inflamed eye at the harmless passers-by in Limpin-lane. It also sheds ensanguined reflections upon various parts of the square, which are very terrible to nervous old ladies from the country, when they wake up suddenly in the middle of the night, and find these reflections flickering on their bed curtains. The doctor, however, has not contrived his lamp well. He only has the crimson pane on one side of it. The consequence is, if you are running for a doctor at the top of your speed in the middle of the night, you see the lamp in the distance, and you steer for it; probably overshoot the mark, and then look up and see a white light. The "danger" signal has suddenly changed to "all right," so you hark back, go round the square again, and it is just possible in your haste that the same fatality may once more occur, and you may—if you are not careful—keep on at that game all night.

It is, however, the aspect of the square by daylight that must first be treated of. Your first idea of the place is, that it must contain some valuable treasure, that it must be the depository of papers of very

great worth. You notice many of the windows are barred, most of the upper windows are fitted with strong little balconies—which seem more like defences than ornaments—and all the lower windows are provided with massive green shutters, riveted and plated with most elaborate contrivances in the way of bolts, bars, hasps, latches, staples, and rings, for keeping them fast. Whatever may have been the original condition of the place, it may be easily seen that the present inhabitants have no gold nor silver nor important documents that they wish to guard, for many of the shutters are never closed from one year's end to the other, and the balconies are gay with geraniums in pots, Virginian creepers, mignonette, or any popular and inexpensive plants that happen to be in season. All the houses are somewhat ancient. Most of them are of the Queen Anne period. They were originally of good, honest, healthy red brick, but more than a century and a half of London smoke and dirt has so smirched their faces with grime, that at the present time they have rather a mouldy appearance. You may notice two houses, however, which seem to have attempted to infuse some novelty amongst their neighbours; they have wrench'd the shutters from their hinges, they have hearthstoned their steps, and also a little crescent-like oasis on the pavement, to snowy whiteness, and have assumed an air of mild joviality, an aspect of pale conviviality. These are the two—let it be whispered softly—the two inns of the place. The inhabitants do not acknowledge them as inns, nor do their proprietors, but still inns they are to all intents and purposes. They look like inns pretending to be private houses, or private houses playing at innkeeping, you cannot be exactly sure which it is. At any rate the pretence does not take many people in. The first might perhaps deceive any but an expert; the door is closed as in a private house, there are three brass bell-pulls on either side, polished to the last pitch of intensity, and there is a tiny brass plate in which you may see a bilious reflection of your face, and read the word "GRIEES." It is not easy to read this, for years of friction and unlimited oil and rotten-stone have effectually rubbed all the black out of the name. The establishment facing the mysterious, rusty padlocked pump on the opposite side of the way, which may be known by a quaint carven canopy over its doorway, attempts to assume an aspect of old-fashioned hospitality, and leaves its door wide open as

if it expected so many people to be dropping in all day that it were scarcely worth while to shut it. It also boldly advertises its calling to the world. On a plate large enough to serve as a monumental brass for the proprietor when he retires for ever from innkeeping, may be seen, "PRAWN'S COMMERCIAL BOARDING HOUSE." The difference between the two establishments may be thus described: Griggs's looks like an inn pretending to be a private house, and Prawn's appears like a private house playing at keeping an inn. Prawn is quite a different man from his neighbour. Prawn gives an air of festivity to his lobby by putting on either side of it measly Portugal laurels, in pots. He may be seen on his door-steps sometimes very early in the morning in his shirt-sleeves. Prawn is very active about his own establishment: he gets up betimes and goes to Covent Garden and buys his vegetables; he knows where the best meat is to be purchased and at the cheapest price; he is not above blacking a pair of boots at a pinch, or carrying a portmanteau to a cab when necessary. Mrs. Prawn does not come much to the front; she is very useful behind the scenes, and knows what cooking ought to be. Her life is made a burden unto her by three mischievous tomboys of girls who are ever and anon running away with the commercial gents' collars, sliding down the banisters, breaking crockery, and stealing choice bits of pastry. The commercial gents are not unfrequently disturbed by yells from below stairs, and on inquiry they will find it is Joey being lectured, Tilly being carried off struggling to bed, or Poppy being whipped. Mrs. Prawn is a Scotch lady, and believes implicitly in Solomonian discipline, and if the Miss Prawns are spoiled it is certainly not by reason of sparing the rod. What with attending to the cooking, looking after her servants, and spanking her daughters, Mrs. Prawn is generally pretty well tired by ten o'clock, and leaves matters to her husband. And when left to himself, over his pipe and rum-and-water, Prawn sometimes is really amusing; he gives the commercial gents to understand that he has been a gay dog in his time, and could divulge a thing or two, if he were so minded. To this house come energetic gentlemen who breakfast punctually at eight o'clock, who sally forth with unaccountably-shaped cases and parcels, who, directly they come in, want to write letters—it does not matter whether they return at eleven or five, they must begin to write

letters at once. If they return at five it becomes an absolute mania, and the scratching of pens in Prawn's parlour is so furious as post time approaches, that it has been likened to a saw-pit in full work, softened by the distance.

At Mrs. Griggs, or Griggs's, as it is more familiarly called, you meet with a very different class of people. The landlady is sad and placid, and the arrangements of her house are sad and placid also. It would be difficult to find a house pervaded with such a dull dead level of harmonious sadness. The curtains hang in a drooping fashion, as if they were sick of the vanities of life; the sofa groans dismally when you sit down, as if its having seen better days were an apology for its hardness. The very feather-beds have an injured appearance. The pillow submits to be punched with a querulous murmur, and the severe, rectangular, ascetic gaseliers look as if they might have been made out of worms that had been trodden on for so long that they had given up turning. There is no springy feel about the carpets; they seem as if they had been ground down by the iron heel of oppression for so long that they had not a particle of softness left in their constitution. There is an air of resignation, an aspect of comfortable despair pervading the whole place; there are a couple of mild martyrs in the shape of waiters, three or four mortified chamber-maids, a cynical cook, and a misanthropic "boots," contained within this extraordinary establishment. And yet, if you are of a sad and placid disposition, you may enjoy yourself very much at Griggs's in a tearful sort of way. If you appreciate a place which "combines all the advantages of an hotel with the comforts of home"—if you can contrive to be happy on a wet Sunday with serious people, and with nothing more lively in literature than the week before last's *Guardian*—you cannot do better than patronise Griggs's. The proprietress has discovered that sadness and placidity are not to be maintained upon pilgrims' fare, so she supplies a very good table, though there is a suspicion of sack-cloth about the serviettes; one looks for ashes in the salt-cellars; the pigeon-pie seems as if it had rent its clothes; and the smoking joints only consent to be comforting under protest. Hither come country clergymen—most of them very Low Churchmen, with a goodly sprinkling of dissenting divines—during the May Meetings. Hither come country cousins by mistake, because they are under the im-

pression that Griggs's is close to St. Paul's, the National Gallery, the Bank of England, all the theatres, and the parks. They make the martyr-waiters think of impaling themselves upon forks, or suspending themselves by their own serviettes; they cause the mortified chamber-maids to have serious thoughts of going into a nunnery, and they nearly drive the misanthropic "boots" into a lunatic asylum by keeping him up to some ungodly hour, on account of their visiting the theatre and coming home in a most hilarious state of mind and clamouring wildly for supper. They cause the clergymen to sigh during the long pre-prandial grace, because they begin crunching a piece of toast to assuage their hunger, and when a couple of bouncing, healthy, fresh-coloured lasses come bounding into the room in the middle of family prayers, the officiating divine looks very grim indeed. Charming little faces, fathomless brown eyes peeping from under a fringe of soft hair, such as Gainsborough might have limned; eloquent grey eyes and delicious dimples, such as Millais would love to paint; round pouting country beauty, such as John Leech might have drawn, have occasionally been seen framed and glazed in the windows of Griggs's.

Law, physic, and divinity are all represented in the square. The beadle is the representative of divinity; then there is the surgeon, and, besides him, we have a proctor. No one in the square has a very clear idea as to what a proctor may be, but it is generally supposed to be an office of an importance little inferior to that of the Lord High Chancellor. This particular proctor, whatever his rank may be, is not at all proud; although he occupies the largest and most comfortable house in the square, he is not above taking notice of his neighbours. He might often be seen chatting affably with the beadle; and it was said that distinguished functionary consulted him upon parish politics and investments—the beadle is reported to be a somewhat "warm" man. It was he who headed the subscription for the ancient Waterloo hero who lodges in the corner house; it was he who went for the doctor when the young lady was so ill at Miss Tank's, the milliner's, and, what is more, paid the doctor's bill; it was he who paid for the crimson lamp when Poppy Prawn threw a stone through it; and it was he who took the tiresome romp home crying, interceded with her mamma, and prevented her receiving the whipping that the young lady knew was in store for her; and it is

he who does many acts of quiet kindness and unobtrusive charity in the square. He is getting somewhat old, his hair is almost white, and they say there is some story of his life being hopelessly broken by the faithlessness of woman in his youth. He is very well to do; he seldom goes out; he amuses himself by playing the violoncello of an evening; and his only dissipation is going to the performances of the Sacred Harmonic Society in the winter. He appears to have no relations whatever; he seldom has any visitors. His place is looked after by a Welsh housekeeper, who is the terror of tradesmen and the bane of butchers' boys. Visitors to Griggs's or Prawn's are often puzzled to know what that crooning noise is that they hear of an evening when the windows are open. It is only the good old proctor, with gold spectacles on nose, trying to master some favourite passage on his violoncello.

Miss Tank's millinery establishment has always been a cause of some trouble to the dwellers in this secluded haven. Miss Tank has been a beauty in her youth; she is good-looking now. She is just one of those persons who seem to focus beauty, and her young ladies are like gleams of sunshine as they pass to and fro. It is pleasant to hear their light laughter amid the clatter of knives and forks at the one o'clock dinner. She looks after her flock in most motherly fashion. Once when she caught an apple-faced boy-curate waving a towel from his bedroom-window at Griggs's, at one of her young ladies, she went over and lectured him till the poor young man blushed all over, stammered, apologised, and protested. She talked to him like a mother, and told him he was a silly boy, and if he did so again she would write and tell his father. But when a long, slimy Dissenter, the Reverend Boanerges Bageye, wrote a note interlarded with texts to her favourite assistant, Cissy Clare, it was a very different matter. She gave the Reverend Boanerges a bit of her mind, and no mistake. She talked to him as no woman had ever talked to him before; she made him give her a most abject written apology, and when he attempted to back out of it threatened to go down to Sniggleby-in-the-Dingle and give all his congregation full particulars of the whole affair. There was some talk about one of Miss Tank's young ladies and a dashing young student who resided for a considerable period at the doctor's. This young man was of decidedly too sportive a tendency for the square; he was given to ring the wrong bells very late

at night ; he once brought some of his companions, and they danced a break-down underneath the lamp at three o'clock in the morning. But worst of all, one summer morning, when he felt more light-hearted than usual, he climb the sacred tree, tapped at Griggs's first-floor window, and when an estimable old lady appeared at the window in a marvellous night-cap, he gibbered at her, and made hideous faces. In his sudden descent from the tree he broke several branches ; this was a thing the inhabitants could not possibly stand, and the doctor was obliged to discharge him forthwith, though he was very clever in his profession, and there was much weeping and wailing at Miss Tank's on the day of his departure.

Then on the other side of the way resides a serious stevedore and his stout wife, who gives herself airs because she had an uncle who was a lieutenant in the navy. There are two fat daughters, who also give themselves airs, and decline to "sit under" the awakening exhortations of the Reverend Hezekiah Hotanstrong in some stuffy little chapel down Shad Thames way, but prefer to go to a fashionable church, and may be seen in gorgeous attire "flaunting," as their father would say, out of the square on a Sunday morning. There is also the German gentleman who deals in toys and beads, who has his ground-floor filled with mysterious packages and gigantic brown-paper parcels, who smokes furiously, and has a favourite cat, which is shunned by all the other cats in the square, as its master is by his neighbours. He is currently reported to be a Communist, and affiliated to several secret societies. He has been seen smoking at his window on a Sunday morning and perusing a paper printed in the German character, and which, as his neighbours are unable to read it, they at once put down as a scurrilous and immoral publication. By the children he is looked upon as an ogre ; they cannot conceive any one having a room full of toys and beads and never giving one away. Hard by the German toy-merchant lives a bank clerk with a bonny wife and half a dozen bonny children. The children have all been born in the square, and they are about the only ones who dare to play and romp under the shadow of the plane-tree, and they do this in a subdued fashion. There is something about the whole place that lends itself to the suppression of noise. The butcher-boy shouts less stridently, the baker puts down his basket softly, the milkman ejaculates "Mee-yaw !" in con-

fidence, as if it were a profound secret, and subdues the clank of his pails. No German bands or niggers would dream of invading this quiet retreat. Occasionally an organ may drift into the square, but the grinder always keeps it covered with a green baize cloth, so that it sounds as if the performer were playing in bed with all the clothes over his head. If a policeman ventures to walk round, he shows a strong disposition to go on tiptoe, and the muffin-man muffles his bell and murmurs "Muffins, O, crumpets," in a soft unctuous voice, which is really quite suggestive of melted butter. If there is one thing the inhabitants of the square are agreed upon, it is muffins and crumpets. Even the grim toy-merchant's features relax visibly when he sticks his teeth into what he is pleased to call a "grompette."

Perhaps the best time for a stranger to make the tour of the square is about nine o'clock at night. They are not particular about pulling down the blinds, so the chances are you will be able to see a good deal of its internal economy. You will doubtless make an especial pause in front of the largest house in the square. You may hear some charming old melody being lovingly interpreted, and you will fancy to yourself that it is the proctor, the beadle, the doctor, and the stevedore—law, physic and divinity, with the stevedore thrown in for ballast—executing a stringed quartette for their own especial amusement. You will wander up and down and listen to the pleasant harmony, as it comes floating out of the red-curtained open window from the cosy old-fashioned room ; you will fancy that they will have something hot for supper afterwards, concerning which the Welsh housekeeper is troubling herself mightily—they are great believers in hot suppers in Sideboard-square—and there will be a quiet rubber and a bowl of punch. You feel certain the proctor is just the man to brew exquisite punch and to keep the secret of making it locked up in his heart of hearts ; you can imagine him filling long-stemmed glasses from a choice china bowl, with a ladle, in which a Queen Anne guinea glitters ever and anon through the generous liquor. You walk up and down and notice the queer radiation of shadows cast by the one lamp in the centre, the ensanguined reflections flung here and there by the doctor's danger-signal ; you note the point where the yellow and red rays and the unaccountable shadows seem to meet in a tangle and have a fight for supremacy, in which the

yellow rays generally somehow or another seem to have the best of it. Probably you will meet no one but Mrs. Griggs's tom-cat, who glares at you with its green eyes, but treads softly and mysteriously as if it were shod with velvet. It does not scream or spit. Even the very cats partake of the subdued gentility of the place. It is said they caterwaul in a whisper, and use spittoons. Later on in the evening, if you choose to stay, you will see queer little shadow pantomimes behind the down-pulled blinds of the upper windows. After the proctor's music has ceased and his guests have quitted, and doors have been softly closed—people seldom bang doors in Sideboard-square—you will notice lights one by one extinguished in the windows, and in a short time there is nothing left but the centre lamp, and the doctor's danger-signal. The doctor's light is at last somewhat turned down, and the centre lamp seems to burn paler. There is no sound to be heard but the rustle of the leaves of the plane-tree, mingled with the persistent snort of a serious snorer at Griggs's. Faintly may be heard when the snorer pauses or the wind ceases to rustle the leaves, the hum of the everlasting London traffic in the distance. And ever and anon do the Dean and Chapter continue to fire horological guns over your head to remind the backward steeples of their slothfulness, and ever and anon do the slothful churches reply and quarrel with each other and keep up a tintinnabulatory fusillade among themselves. So quiet is the little square, so strange, so quaint, so behind the age, that you take your departure doubting very much that this is the nineteenth century, and that you have been wandering in the very heart of the busiest part of the busiest city in the world.

MARRIED LIFE IN CHINA.

VERY little is known in this country of the married life of the Chinese, but nevertheless their habits and customs in this respect are very minute, and by no means devoid of interest. The patriarchal system of the country is exhibited, on a small scale, in all Chinese households; for as the emperor claims to be, and theoretically is, the absolute and despotic ruler of his subjects, so every father exercises a similar power over his family, even claiming the right to sell his children as slaves.

A woman in China, when once she is married, and has assumed her husband's

clan-name, becomes part and parcel of his family, and henceforward she has but a slight connexion with her own relations, her duty and obedience being entirely transferred to her husband and his parents, the latter of whom, sad to relate, frequently treat her with great cruelty, and more as a slave than a daughter-in-law.

The Chinese wife's great hope and ambition are that she may have male offspring to perpetuate her husband's name, to care for and support him in old age, and, after death, to watch over and offer sacrifices at his grave, and at stated periods to burn incense before his tablet. If she chance to be so unfortunate as to have no children, or only daughters, there is rarely any happiness in store for her in her married life, and her husband is very likely to take to himself a concubine, if he can afford to do so, hoping thereby to attain the darling wish of his heart.

When women have no children they supplicate the goddess Hui-fu Fu-jen to aid them and send them sons, for, if possible, they would rather not have daughters. If a man have no sons he is thought to "live without honour and die unhappy," and so eager is a Chinaman for a male heir, that, failing a son of his own, he will adopt one from his brothers' families, if he can get one. Occasionally, too, from this all-absorbing desire for a son, parents will bribe a nurse to get some poor man's boy and substitute him for a newly-born daughter. In the exaggerated phraseology common to the Chinese, those who do this are said "To lung, huan feng," that is, to steal a dragon and exchange it for a phoenix.

The following customs, related in the Social Life of the Chinese, are rather amusing, and show what devices women in the Celestial Empire will resort to in the hope that they may thereby be blessed with children. Every year, between the eleventh and fifteenth day of the first and eighth Chinese moons, several of the most popular temples devoted to the worship of a goddess of children, commonly called "Mother," are frequented by married, but childless, women, for the purpose of procuring one of a kind of shoe belonging to her. Those who come for a shoe burn incense and candles before the image of "Mother," and vow that they will offer a thanksgiving, if she will aid them in bearing a male child. The shoe is taken home and placed in the niche, which holds the family image of the goddess, where it is worshipped in connexion with "Mother," though not separately, on the first and fifteenth days of

each moon; fresh flowers are then offered up, and incense, candles, and mock-money are burned. When the child thus prayed for is born, should such a fortunate event take place, the happy mother, in accordance with her vow, causes two shoes to be made like the one obtained from the temple. These two and the original one are brought to the temple with her thank-offering, which generally consists of several plates of food. Some women, instead of asking for a shoe of the goddess, beg some of the flowers which she usually has in her hands or in a flower-vase near by. The shoe is lent, but the flowers are given. On reaching home some women fasten the flowers thus obtained in their hair, whilst others place them in a vase near the niche mentioned above. Should the suppliants not become mothers, no thanksgiving would be expected by the goddess whose aid had been invoked.

When a son is born there are great rejoicings in a family, and shortly afterwards what is termed the "milk name" is given, which answers to "pet names" amongst ourselves. Later on the boy receives a regular name, usually of two characters, corresponding to what we call the "Christian name;" when written it is placed after the clan or surname. When grown up even, boys are often called, not by their proper names, but by their number in the family—for example, A-sze or A-woo, that is, Number Four or Number Five.

On the third day after its birth the nurse washes the child for the first time, before the family image of the goddess "Mother," who is currently believed to watch over all children till they reach their sixteenth year, and at the same time a thank-offering of meat, cakes, fruit, wine, flowers, &c., is placed before her, in recognition of her aid in the character of *Lucina*. As is always the case with such like oblations in China, they are afterwards consumed by the family.

The important ceremony of "binding the wrists" is now observed, and the practice in this matter differs considerably. A common plan is to tie a piece of red cotton loosely round the wrists; another is to fasten some ancient copper coins on the wrists for several days by means of red cotton. In some families this is not finally removed from the infant's wrists for several months, though it is more usual to take it off after fourteen days. The idea is that this binding of the wrists together will prevent the baby from being wicked and disobedient, not only in childhood, but also

in after-life. In allusion to this singular custom, when children are troublesome or naughty, they are asked if their mothers neglected to bind their wrists.

When the baby is a month old the head is shaved for the first time, and in the case of a boy this ceremony is performed before the Ancestral Tablets. A feast is also given, to which the relatives and intimate friends are invited, and it is customary for them to bring presents of toys, food, money, &c.; they also frequently club together and send the infant a silver plate, on which they inscribe three characters, meaning Longevity, Honour, and Happiness. Shortly after this, the parents make their acknowledgments to their various friends for their congratulations and for the presents which they have sent; this is commonly done by sending a small present of cakes in return. At a subsequent entertainment, which sometimes takes place when the child is four months old, the "happy father," it is said, "bows down before the goddess ('Mother'), and begs that the child may be good-natured and easy to take care of, that it may grow fat, that it may sleep well at night, and that it may not be given to crying," &c. From this we may naturally infer that the habits of Chinese babies are much the same as those of our own, and that distracted parents in China, as elsewhere, know what it is to have wakeful nights and squalling babies.

The maternal grandmother, when a boy is a year old, sends him a present of a cap and a pair of shoes, as well as some other garments, and on this occasion another family feast is held to celebrate the birthday.

English mothers, whose children are backward in walking, will be amused at the following piece of Chinese nursery superstition: "It is the custom in many families, when the child is just beginning to walk alone, for a member of the family to take a large knife, often such as is used in the kitchen to cut up vegetables, and, approaching him from behind as he is toddling along, to put it between his legs, or hold it a little way off him, with the edge downwards, and then to bring it to the ground, as if in the act of cutting something. This is called 'cutting the cords of his feet,' and the motion is repeated two or three times. It is done in order to facilitate his learning to walk, and is supposed to be of great use in keeping the child from stumbling and falling down."

After the shaving of the head at the end of the first month, it is a common practice to allow a patch of hair to grow on the

top, if the child be a boy, and on both sides, if a girl; the hair is braided into tight little queues, which stick out, and give the children a very comical look in their earlier years. When a girl, however, reaches womanhood, she ceases to wear these queues, which have latterly hung down her back in glossy braids, and her hair is done up on her head in the peculiar Chinese style, which, we believe, varies but little all over the empire, and report says—that we cannot vouch for the accuracy of the story—that the singular edifice is very rarely taken to pieces, and that the women use a curious little cane pillow to prevent the disarrangement of their hair at night.

On the fifteenth day of the first moon of the year, the birthday of the goddess "Mother" occurs, and, as we have remarked in a previous article,* married women then repair to the temples, and worship her, burning incense, and having crackers let off in her honour. Of this fact we can speak from personal experience, having lived for upwards of two years within a few yards of such a temple, and having been often nearly suffocated with the smell and fumes of the burning joss-sticks; the firework part of the performance, too, was always carried on con amore, as we know to our cost. The din and clamour raised by the crowds of women frequenting the small temple of which we speak, on "Mother's" high festivals, will never fade from our memory, for they were truly awful, and could hardly be said to savour much of real devotion.

When a boy goes to school for the first time, he is expected to take with him two small candles, some incense-sticks, and mock-money, all of which are burned in honour of Confucius before a slip of paper bearing some such inscription as "the Teacher, a pattern for ten thousand ages," or one of the great sage's other numerous titles, the new pupil bowing down and making his prostrations the while. About the end of spring in each year, schoolmasters often give their boys a treat, when very similar, though more elaborate, ceremonies are performed, and it is the custom for the pupils to bring presents of money to defray the expenses.

Children of both sexes are said to "go out of childhood," when they are about sixteen years of age, as in China they are then considered to have become adults, and the event is usually celebrated by

certain family observances. It must, however, be borne in mind that, though a child in China becomes of age at sixteen, he is not thereby emancipated from the control of his parents, for during their lifetime he is bound by law and custom to obey them implicitly, be he ever so old or ever so wealthy. The only exception that is made to this rule is when the child has attained to some office under government, and then he is obliged to render his obedience to the emperor, who, whilst he is in the public service, stands to him in *loco parentis*. When a son has reached his sixteenth year, he commonly assumes the direction of the business matters of the family, if his father be dead, unless, indeed, as sometimes happens, his mother have a very strong will of her own. The doctrine inculcated in the Chinese Classics is that a woman has three stages of obedience: to wit, first, she must obey her father (before she marries); second, her husband (after she is married); and, third, her son (when her husband is dead), provided, of course, that the son have reached the age of manhood. In the last-named case, however, law and custom would never uphold the son in treating his mother in an unkind or unfilial manner. Filial piety is held in the highest esteem in China, even to an exaggerated extent, and it may happen that, in cases of extremely unfilial conduct, parents will bring their offspring before the district magistrate, and invoke the aid of the law in support of their rights; such instances are, however, rare, but they occasionally occur, and the only persons who have any claim to be consulted are the maternal uncles of the accused, who, if these concur with his parents in their view of his misconduct, stands a very bad chance indeed of escaping without some serious mark of indignity, if he be lucky enough to get off without severe punishment.

"Fathers have virtually the power of life and death over their children, for even if they kill them designedly, they are subject to only the chastisement of the bamboo and a year's banishment; if struck by them, to no punishment at all. The penalty of striking parents, or for cursing them, is death, as among the Hebrews. In practice it does not appear that this absolute power bestowed on fathers is productive of evil, the natural feeling being, on the whole, a sufficient security against its abuse."*

If a son be convicted of the murder of either of his parents, Chinese law visits the

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, vol. x. p. 256.

* The Chinese, by Sir John Davis.

crime with awful severity, for not only is the murderer executed, but his body is cut up into small pieces, and everything possible is done to mark the enormity of the crime. On this point the following extract, from the work quoted before, describes very graphically the course that is pursued: "A man and his wife had beaten and otherwise severely ill-used the mother of the former. This being reported by the viceroy to Peking, it was determined to enforce, in a singular manner, the fundamental principles of the empire. The very place where it occurred was anathematised, as it were, and made accursed. The principal offenders were put to death; the mother of the wife was bambooed, branded, and exiled for her daughter's crime; the scholars of the district, for three years, were not permitted to attend the public examinations, and their promotion thereby stopped; the magistrates were deprived of their office, and banished. The house in which the offenders dwelt was dug up from the foundations. 'Let the viceroy,' the edict adds, 'make known this proclamation, and let it be dispersed through the whole empire, that the people may all learn it. And if there be any rebellious children who oppose, beat, or degrade their parents, they shall be punished in like manner. If the people, indeed, know the principles of reverence, then they will fear and obey the imperial will, and not look on this as empty declamation. I instruct the magistrates of every province to warn the heads of families and elders of villages, and on the second and sixteenth of every month to read the Sacred Instructions, in order to show the importance of the relations of life, that persons may not rebel against their parents, for I intend to render the empire filial.'" The foregoing paragraph will give a very clear idea of what is universally the theory on the subject in China, but, judging from our own knowledge of their character, we much fear that in this, as well as in very many other matters, the Chinese are more perfect in their theory than in their practice.

YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOBSON'S CHOICE," &c.

CHAPTER XLIII. HOMEWARDS.

"YES, they're pretty enough, Mr. Nightingale, and clever, decidedly clever. You possess taste, I think, for this kind of thing."

I was exhibiting a portfolio of my draw-

ings to Sir George. His approval gratified me extremely.

"Show me your original drawings; the copies are of less importance. Yes; fanciful and pleasant, with a delicate sense of colour. There are technical deficiencies, of course; your eye wants training, and your hand is oftentimes unsteady. That leg, for instance, is sadly out of drawing, and the whole figure is deficient in proportion. Still it's graceful and animated. You should be capable of better things."

He was paler even than usual; he spoke languidly, and appeared to be suffering somewhat. But his manner was very kindly and courteous.

"If art were really to be your vocation—but you have decided otherwise, as I understand—I should advise your becoming a probationer in the schools of the Royal Academy." He explained the formal proceedings necessary for the attainment of that end. "There is nothing like skill and correctness as a draughtsman. Students are too apt to fly to the brush before they have well learnt how to ply the crayon. The Antique and Life Schools at Somerset House are most admirably conducted, and of the greatest value to the young artist. I speak from experience when I dwell upon the importance to a painter of a thorough and intimate knowledge of drawing."

I thought of Mole's treasonable whisper to me: "The fact is, Sir George can't draw!"

"However," he continued, with a smile, "you are not to be an artist by profession, it seems, Mr. Nightingale. Happy man! Only an amateur. Still, it's as well to be a good amateur as a bad one."

I was then emboldened to ask if there was any vacancy in his studio for another assistant. He appeared to be surprised at my inquiry, but in no degree offended.

"Are you speaking for yourself or for another? What! you are a patron? You have already a protégé? It's rather soon, is it not? If it was on your own account that you applied I should not hesitate. I don't scruple to say that you could be of service here. In any case I will see what can be done. I will try to count your friend as my friend. Mr. Wray, you say? I don't know the name. A nephew of Mr. Monck's? He didn't like the law, and so—Well, that proves his possession of some taste, at any rate. And you vouch for his ability? Well, I'll speak to Mole about it. If I should forget, don't scruple to remind me. You will

come and see me again shortly, of course. You must remember, however, that the London season is now nearly over. In a little time we shall be nothing like so busy in the painting-room as we are at present; but, later in the year— You are much bent upon this thing? I see you are. I'll take the merits of your friend, Mr. Wray, for granted, then. My dear Duke, I'll see what can be done."

It was the first time he had ever called me "Duke." He shook hands with me cordially as I quitted him, after thanking him again and again for his kindness. He seemed amused at my excessive, and perhaps rather clumsy, expressions of gratitude. There was nothing cynical in his smile this time, however; it seemed to be thoroughly sympathetic. Yet he was in some pain the while, I felt. I noted that there were dark circles round his eyes, and that he once or twice pressed his white hands upon his brow. His lips were colourless, and his eyes without lustre.

With his office coat, Vickery seemed to have resumed the character in which I had first known him. He was no longer the convivial Vickery, the playgoer, the singer of Post Meridian, with a hint at performances on the flute, that he had appeared in Tony's chambers; he was again Mr. Monck's manager, intent upon legal affairs. He seemed anxious that I should forget that I had ever seen him under any other conditions. I found him fixed in his usual place, and hard at work on the morning following that night of excitement and revelry. His aspect bore no trace of the recent festivities. Some brief reference to the event he did permit himself, however.

"A droll man your friend Mr. Mole; yet I should say a man of great abilities, Mr. Nightingale; and very versatile; uncommonly versatile, to be sure. A most pleasant evening. And your tragedy; it quite took me by surprise. Really a very able work, if I am competent to form an opinion. And now, I think, we must really push on with that Supplemental Bill. It's been settled by counsel, and it's considered important that it should be filed before the Long Vacation, which is now—time flies so—close upon us. Precisely."

He did not again speak of our famous symposium of poesy and punch, song and oratory. Yet now and then, I think, thoughts of it recurred to him with a genial warming influence. I observed him unconsciously chuckling over his writings; strange lights gleamed in his cat's-eyes

at intervals, and unaccountable smiles, the uneasy ghosts of departed merriment, for some time haunted his grim old visage.

It had been arranged that the arrival of the Long Vacation should bring me some respite from my professional studies. I was to enjoy a brief holiday, and to visit my relations at Purrington. Vickery did not view this project very favourably. "It seems a pity to lose so much valuable time," he said. "We usually employ the vacation in making out our bills of costs. That's an important practical part of a lawyer's business, Mr. Nightingale. In point of fact we're nothing without our bills of costs. You can't learn too soon how to make them out, Mr. Nightingale. It's really a great thing to know how to charge a client." Notwithstanding, I determined to avail myself of the opportunity of a holiday.

Indeed, I longed to be at home again. I was growing weary of London, its heat, and smoke, and dust. I pined for pure, fresh, exhilarating air, for the cheering sight again of our open wide-stretching down country, with its exquisite wavy lines of far horizon, fading and melting into the soft sweet tints of the distant sky. Chimney-pots and pavement had become odious to me. I reproached myself with having insufficiently prized my home at the farmhouse. I had quitted it with undue eagerness and unaccountable lightness of heart. For months I had almost forgotten it. My letters to my mother had been, if not less frequent, certainly less supplied with information than they should have been. I had sometimes found it rather a task and a tax to write at all. Now all this was changed. I felt that I had much, very much, to say to the dear old home-folk, and I longed, greatly longed, to be with them once more. The Down Farm seemed to me a sort of Paradise, from which I was unfairly excluded. I dreamt of it. Plainly before me appeared its homely red brick face rising from its hollow in the tender green down, like a robin peering from its nest, with the belt of murmuring firs, Orme's Plantation, in the background; the dun-purple old barn with its ragged grey thatch; the corpulent wheat ricks; the verdant water meadows running down towards the silvery Purr; with Reube's fold and thriving flock, and the musical sheep-bells chiming pleasantly about the still landscape bathed in sunlight. I was home sick for awhile; out of simple fickleness it might be. But in truth I was a little

jaded with my town life. As I looked in my glass—I was often thus engaged now—chiefly in search of whiskers I think—I noted that there was quite a London pallor on my face, and something of a London hollowness about my cheeks. At any rate, I could no longer, on the score of my aspect, be accurately described as “a regular yokel.” And to a country-bred youth London was now in its most trying season. The heat was stifling; there was no escape from the glaring, scorching sun; its torrid rays were reflected and multiplied infinitely by windows, roofs, and paving stones; there was not air enough, or there were too many breathing it; the great city in the dog-day weather seemed turned to carrion and corruption, and was most malodorous; even night brought no relief, for the darkness came down oppressively, in thick and heavy folds like a suffocating pall.

I had planned to take Tony with me into the country, in part because I so greatly prized his companionship, but also because I felt the change might greatly benefit his ailing health. At my instance my mother had written to him begging him to journey with me to Purrington. He hesitated a little, for he thought the Milliner’s Magazine had claims upon his presence in town. I then explained to him the good prospect there was of his obtaining employment of a more worthy kind in Sir George’s studio. This greatly delighted him. With characteristic alacrity he gave up colouring the fashion-plates for *La Mode*, and forthwith began to entertain very favourable opinions on the subject of portrait-painting. “Do you know,” he said, “I think I’ve rather underrated it, hitherto. Painters of history, or those aspiring to be painters of history, are rather apt to underrate portrait-painting perhaps. And yet there’s surely a great deal to be said for it. There have been very great portrait-painters. Raffaelle, you know, painted portraits, and Titian and Tintoret, and, of course, Rubens and Vandyck, and a score more of really the greatest names in art. I think I could carry the thing beyond Sir George; his method wants elevation; I could supply an element of the grand style that would be of extraordinary advantage to his art. I am sure I could be of very great service to him. I quite look forward to working in his studio, and in a quiet way promoting the regeneration of portrait-painting. It has been great in the past, even here in England; why should it not

be great again in the future? I should be quite content to allow him the credit of my exertions. I am unambitious—humble-minded. It will suffice me to know that one or two, including, of course, yourself, my dear Duke, to whom I never can be sufficiently grateful for this and a thousand other kindnesses—I shall be well satisfied, I say, if but one or two share my secret, and recognise in me the real reformer and benefactor of British portraiture.”

I had seen Rachel Monck again. It was on the eve of my quitting town. I was impressed anew with the winning grace and repose of her aspect and manner. Yet she looked very sad, I thought; her lips and eyelids trembled, and she pressed her hand upon her brow. The action had become habitual with her. I feared that Mr. Monck’s state of health had given her new alarm. But it was not that; he was even better, she said, than he had been for some days past. I was soon to know what had distressed her. She handed me a little packet; it contained five guineas.

“You meant kindly, Mr. Nightingale, I’m sure,” she said, in rather a troubled voice, “when you lent this money to Tony with a pretence that it came from me. But please don’t do so again. You cannot think how deeply you have distressed me. I have seen my cousin. He would not come to me; so last night I took courage and went to find him at his chambers. I learned from him of what you had done. It was not right; it was not fair to him or to me.”

I was much grieved. I could scarcely find a word to say.

“Pray believe I did it for the best, Miss Monck,” I murmured. The thought that I had incurred her displeasure was very painful to me.

“We are too much in your debt already, Mr. Nightingale,” she said, “and this was not really kind. If Tony, poor boy, was in want, the fact should not have been kept from me. I am not so poor but I could have helped him, at least I would have tried my best to help him. He has been hardly used, I know. He has been made to share in our misfortunes when they should, in truth, have been kept far from him. But there was no intention, indeed there was not, to deal unjustly by him. My poor father—”

Her voice trembled, and then seemed to fail her altogether. I was powerless to assist her, and I took shame to myself that I was standing beside her dumb and mo-

tionless, noting the while her crimsoning cheeks, her falling tears, her confusion, and suffering.

"I do trust," she resumed, as presently she grew calmer, "that all will yet be well, and that Tony will receive in full all that is due to him—to the very last farthing. Meanwhile, a little patience is all I ask of him. He will not grudge me that, I know. And you, Mr. Nightingale—"

"Pray forgive me, Miss Monck. I am sensible of my misconduct. I deeply regret it. Pray believe I am sufficiently punished in the thought that I have pained, offended you—merited your anger, indeed."

"No, no, Mr. Nightingale, it is not so bad as that," and she smiled most exquisitely through her tears.

I longed to fall at her feet.

"Indeed, I did not force myself into his confidence."

"I am sure you did not. There could be no need. Poor Tony!"

Her words reproached me; though perhaps she had not meant that they should.

"I knew that he was a little pressed for money. I had some to spare. He would not borrow of me—"

"That was so like him! Of course he would not borrow of you."

"But it seemed so hard that I should not help him, when I could. And so—Say you forgive me, Miss Monck?"

"There is no need for my saying so."

"But there is, Miss Monck. It will relieve me so much to hear from your own lips—"

"I forgive you with all my heart. And I thank you. You are only charged with being too kind. It is not a grave offence, nor a frequent. Only, there are some kindnesses we must not, I cannot, accept even from you, Mr. Nightingale."

Her words and her manner of speaking them thrilled and rejoiced me indescribably.

"He does not know, even now, that it was you that helped him. It will be better, I think, that he should not know."

"Much better," I said.

"He thinks the money really came from me. I did not underrate him. Somehow, I am jealous of any one's helping my poor boy but myself. It may seem to you a foolish fancy, perhaps; but you cannot know how dear he is to me. As I have told you, I have no living relatives but Tony and my father. Naturally I cannot bear that any one should come between us to part us, or

to seem to part us. You will remember this, I am sure, Mr. Nightingale, and humour my whim, if you like to think it one. He is going with you into the country, he tells me, for some weeks. I am glad of it. It will do him good, I'm sure. He wants change sadly. I was pained to see how pale and thin he looked. He has been working too hard, I fear. Poor boy, it's cruel, it seems to me, that he should have to work at all. You see, I am not really distrustful of you, Mr. Nightingale. My confidence in you is most complete. I surrender my poor boy into your keeping. You are his friend and very dear to him, as he has told me again and again. He is proud of your friendship, and I am glad, indeed, that he has found a friend in you. Only please take care of him, and bring him safe and well back to me."

Her manner was almost playful, yet there was something curiously plaintive about it too. Her lips smiled, but her eyes were tearful, and there were melancholy notes in the animated music of her voice.

EDITORIAL NOTE.

THREE-AND-TWENTY years ago, a story of Australian adventure, called "Two-Handed Dick, the Stockman," was published in the sixth number of *HOUSEHOLD WORDS*. A copy of this paper, exact in every particular, except for two or three words added by the copyist, was recently offered for publication in *ALL THE YEAR ROUND*. Fortunately the Conductor of this Journal at once recognised "Two-Handed Dick" as an old acquaintance, and, after some search, discovered the history of his adventures in its original form.

A letter to the sender of the manuscript, asking him if he had any sort of explanation to offer before the public exposure of the attempted fraud, having remained unanswered for a week, the Conductor of *ALL THE YEAR ROUND* thinks it highly desirable that, without further comment on his part, the public should be made acquainted with the facts above recorded. Furthermore, to put his brother editors on their guard respecting any manuscripts coming from the same source, he begs to call their attention to the name and address of the copyist in question. The manuscript is signed "H. Clifford, Ellesmere Club, Manchester."

The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.